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Beyond 9 to 5

The Diversity of Employment Among 1992-93 College Graduates in 1997

Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Reports

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Numerous studies have examined the employment benefits of earning a bachelor's degree, concluding that higher levels of education sharply increase one's earning potential and employment opportunities (Cappelli et al. 1997). In particular, several studies have demonstrated the labor market advantage that students who concentrate in applied fields, such as business and engineering, experience with respect to higher salaries and full-time employment (e.g., Grogger and Eide 1995; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Rumberger and Thomas 1993). However, today's labor market does not necessarily guarantee a college graduate a traditional 9 to 5 job, nor is this type of employment the only option. Bachelor's degree recipients are well-represented in the contingent (short-term) workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2001; Hipple 1998), but there is little research that examines the experiences of bachelor's degree recipients who are not full-time professional employees, but instead have alternative employment.

Although alternative employment is defined differently in various studies, this analysis examines both *alternative working arrangements* and *occupation types*. Alternative working arrangements examined here include self-employment, part-time employment, and employment in multiple jobs. An aggregate variable indicating whether or not the respondent was in *any* of these three employment situations is also included. In addition, this analysis explores the occupation type of the respondents: clerical

and support occupations and field professions¹ are both considered alternative employment for this study because they include jobs historically filled by workers without bachelor's degrees (Decker, Rice, and Moore 1997).

This study uses data from the 1993/97 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:93/97), representing college graduates who received their bachelor's degrees in academic year 1992–93. Survey participants were sampled from the 1992–93 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:93) and were first surveyed in their final year of college, with follow-ups conducted in 1994 and 1997, approximately 1 year and 4 years after graduation. The analysis focuses primarily on employment in 1997 and includes those who were employed and not enrolled for further study at that time. The data are used to address the following questions: How prevalent is alternative employment among bachelor's degree recipients who are not enrolled? Which bachelor's degree recipients are most likely to work in alternative employment, by various demographic, family, and academic characteristics, particularly by gender? What are the differences between patterns of alternative employment when graduates are 1 year out of college and when they are 4 years out of college? How do those in alternative employment differ from those in traditional employment in

¹“Field professions” include jobs such as those in farming and forestry, protective services, and health and recreation services, professions that are likely to involve long or nontraditional hours or work outside of a conventional office setting. See the glossary for complete information about the occupation types examined in this analysis.

terms of their reasons for taking their job, benefits, salaries, and job satisfaction?

Prevalence of Alternative Employment

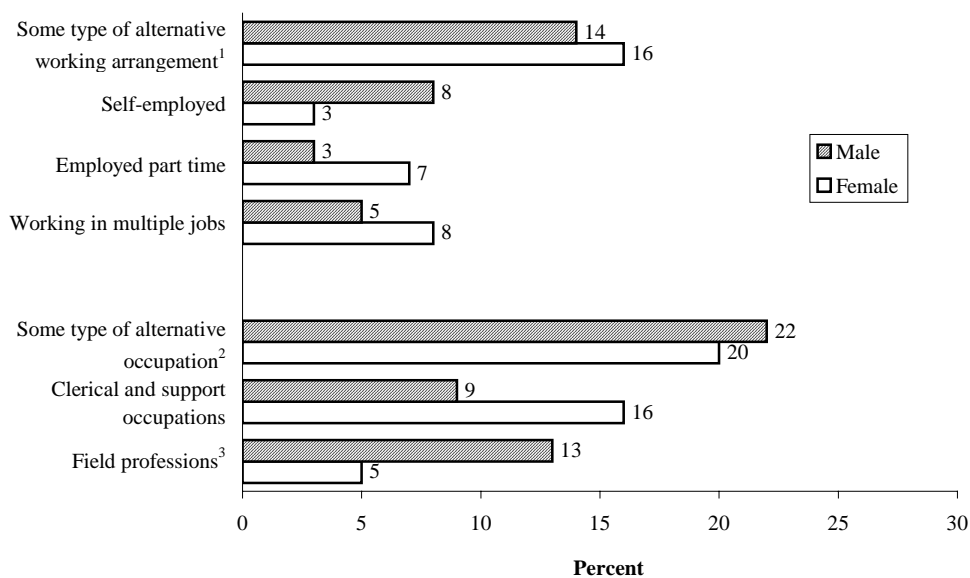
In 1997, about two-thirds (68 percent) of employed 1992–93 bachelor’s degree recipients who were not enrolled for further study worked in jobs considered traditional for college graduates—that is, they worked full time for someone else in one professional job. Self-employment, working part time, and being employed in multiple jobs were each relatively uncommon among employed, nonenrolled 1992–93 bachelor’s degree recipients (5 percent were self-employed, 5 percent were

employed part time, and 7 percent worked in multiple jobs). In all, 15 percent reported working in at least one of these three types of alternative working arrangements. Also, 13 percent reported working in clerical and support occupations, and an additional 8 percent reported working in field professions.

Demographic, Family, and Academic Characteristics

Consistent with other current research (Callaghan and Hartmann 1991; Polivka 1996a, 1996b), this analysis indicates that gender was associated with many types of alternative employment (figure A). Among 1992–93

Figure A.—Percentage of employed 1992–93 bachelor’s degree recipients not enrolled who were in alternative employment, by gender: 1997



¹Includes self-employment, part-time employment, and employment in multiple jobs. These categories do not sum to the total because they are not mutually exclusive.

²Detail may not sum to total due to rounding.

³These include such fields as farming and forestry, protective services, and health and recreational services. See the glossary for further details.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993/97 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:93/97).

bachelor's degree recipients who were employed but not enrolled in 1997, women were more likely than men to have some type of alternative working arrangement (16 vs. 14 percent). However, the gender differences varied with the specific type of alternative working arrangement considered.

Women were more likely than men to have part-time employment (7 vs. 3 percent) or multiple jobs (8 vs. 5 percent), while men were more likely than women to be self-employed (8 vs. 3 percent).

Women were also more likely than men to work in clerical or support occupations (16 vs. 9 percent), while men were more likely than women to work in field professions (13 vs. 5 percent). Except for working in multiple jobs, these differences in alternative employment remained even after controlling for other variables.

Family characteristics were related to various alternative working arrangements among women, but few differences by family characteristics were detected among men. For example, among women, having dependents was associated with a greater likelihood of having some type of alternative working arrangement (24 vs. 13 percent), specifically, self-employment (5 vs. 3 percent) or part-time employment (15 vs. 4 percent). However, these differences were not detected among men. Among both men and women, marital status was related to working part time. However, while married women were more likely than single women to work part time (10 vs. 4 percent), married men were *less* likely than their single counterparts to work part time (2 vs. 4 percent).

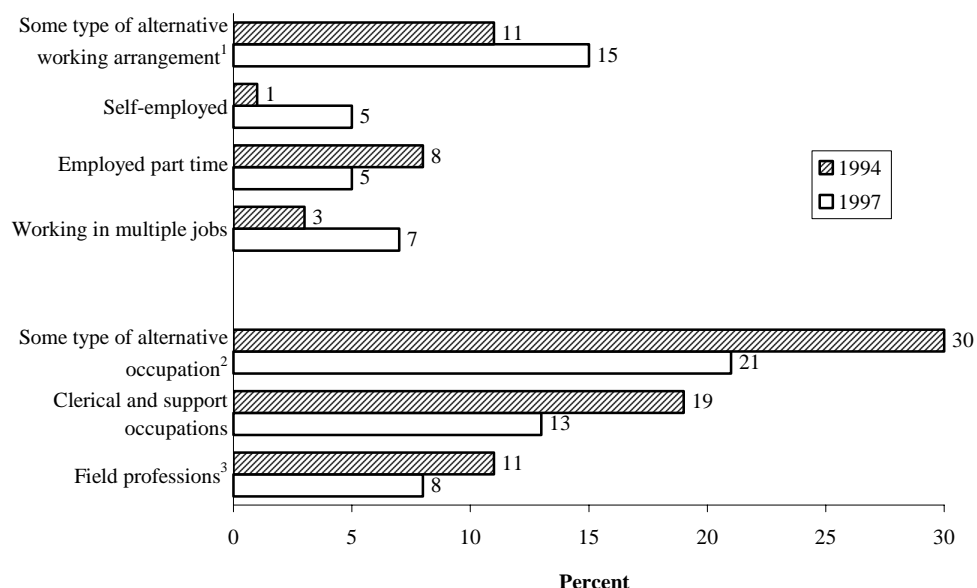
Some aspects of the academic experiences of 1992–93 bachelor's degree recipients were associated with various types of alternative employment in 1997, 4 years after college completion. Undergraduate grade-point average (GPA) was associated with the likelihood of working part time, having a clerical or support

occupation, and having a field profession. As GPA increased, so did the prospect of having part-time employment. In contrast, as GPA increased, the likelihood of having a clerical and support or field occupation decreased.

Several studies have shown that students who concentrate in applied fields such as business and engineering are more likely to be employed full time (Grogger and Eide 1995; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Rumberger and Thomas 1993). Consistent with these studies, this analysis shows that business and engineering majors were less likely than average to report having a part-time job (2 percent each vs. 5 percent). Undergraduate major was also associated with type of occupation. Nineteen percent of social science majors reported working in clerical and support occupations. In contrast, education, engineering, and health majors were less likely than average to work in clerical and support occupations (7, 2, and 6 vs. 13 percent). And health majors were less likely than average to work in field professions (2 vs. 8 percent). Because education, engineering, and health are applied fields in which students are preparing for specific professional careers, students who major in these fields are particularly likely to be employed in them after completing college (Horn and Zahn 2001). By definition, the areas for which they have prepared (teaching, medical professions, and engineering) are included in the professional occupations.

Alternative Employment 1 and 4 Years After College Completion

This analysis also examines how the alternative employment experiences of college graduates differed when they were 1 year and 4 years out of college (figure B). Employed 1992–93 bachelor's degree recipients who were not enrolled were more likely to have some type of alternative

Figure B.—Percentage of employed 1992–93 bachelor’s degree recipients not enrolled who were in alternative employment: 1994 and 1997

¹Includes self-employment, part-time employment, and employment in multiple jobs. These categories do not sum to the total because they are not mutually exclusive.

²Detail may not sum to total due to rounding.

³These include such fields as farming and forestry, protective services, and health and recreational services. See the glossary for further details.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993/97 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:93/97).

working arrangement in 1997 than they were in 1994 (15 vs. 11 percent). Specifically, in 1997 compared with 1994, they were more likely to have multiple jobs (7 vs. 3 percent) or to be self-employed (5 vs. 1 percent). Conversely, in 1997, they were less likely to work part time or to have clerical and support occupations or field professions.

Many gender differences in alternative employment persisted from 1 year to 4 years out of college. In both 1994 and 1997, women were more likely than men to have some type of alternative working arrangement (13 vs. 10 percent in 1994; 16 vs. 14 percent in 1997). In 1994, women were more likely than men to work part time (9 vs. 6 percent) or to have clerical and support jobs (23

vs. 14 percent), while men were more likely than women to work in field professions (16 vs. 7 percent) or to be self-employed (2 vs. 1 percent). These patterns were consistent with the differences found for 1997, as described in the previous section.

Working in alternative employment in 1994 was associated with a greater likelihood of doing so in 1997. Specifically, 45 percent of those who were self-employed in 1994 were also self-employed in 1997, compared with 5 percent of those who were not self-employed in 1994. About half (51 percent) of those who had multiple jobs in 1994 also did in 1997, compared with 5 percent of those who did not have multiple jobs in 1994. In addition, part-time workers in 1994 were more

likely than their full-time counterparts to be working part time in 1997 as well (18 vs. 4 percent). Finally, one-third (36 percent) of those who had clerical and support jobs in 1994 also had clerical and support jobs in 1997, compared with 7–10 percent of those with other types of jobs in 1994. Similarly, 43 percent of those with field professions in 1994 were still in positions of this type in 1997, compared with 4–5 percent of those with other occupations in 1994.

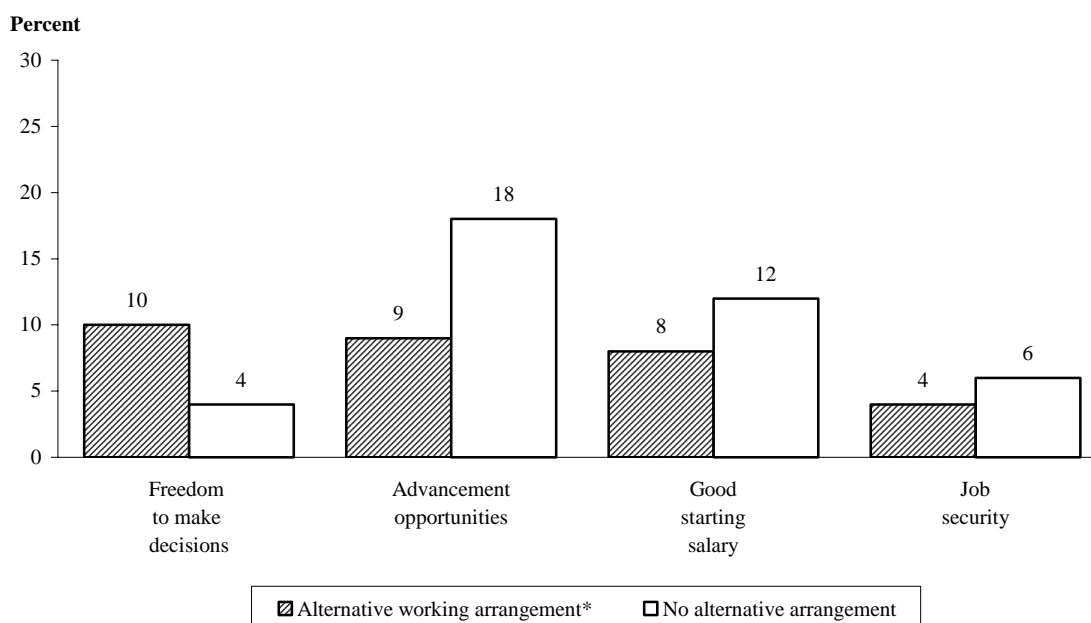
Alternative Employment and Other Labor Market Experiences

Workers have a range of reasons for voluntarily or involuntarily working in alternative employment, balancing the disadvantages and

benefits associated with particular jobs. Studies suggest a number of reasons why a worker may not have a traditional job. For example, a worker may not be able to find permanent work, or he or she may choose alternative employment to obtain flexible hours, to make a transition into a new job or field, or to earn more money (Lester 1996; Rothstein 1996).

Among 1992–93 bachelor's degree recipients who were employed but not enrolled in 1997, those with some type of alternative working arrangement were more likely than others to report having the freedom to make decisions as a reason for taking their job (10 vs. 4 percent; figure C). Part-time workers were more likely than those working full time to cite convenience (12 vs. 8

Figure C.—Percentage of employed 1992–93 bachelor's degree recipients not enrolled who gave various reasons for taking their jobs, by alternative working arrangement: 1997



*Includes self-employment, part-time employment, and employment in multiple jobs. These categories are not mutually exclusive.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1993/97 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B:93/97).

percent) or having time for non-work-related activities (5 vs. 2 percent) as a reason for choosing their job. Also, those who were self-employed were more likely to cite income potential as a reason for choosing their job (17 vs. 10 percent). On the other hand, those with some type of alternative working arrangement were less likely to report interesting work (15 vs. 19 percent), advancement opportunities (9 vs. 18 percent), good starting salary (8 vs. 12 percent), or good job security (4 vs. 6 percent) as a reason for taking their job.

Part-time workers were less likely than full-time workers to receive each of the benefits examined—health insurance benefits (41 vs. 91 percent), paid sick leave (39 vs. 88 percent), paid vacation (39 vs. 90 percent), retirement benefits (44 vs. 82 percent), family-related benefits (31 vs. 70 percent), and job training (29 vs. 47 percent). Among full-time workers, those with some type of alternative working arrangement were less likely than others to receive each benefit examined. Full-time workers who were self-employed or had multiple jobs were less likely than others to receive benefits. In addition, full-time workers employed in field professions were generally less likely than those employed in professional occupations or clerical and support occupations to receive benefits. Fewer differences in benefits were detected among part-time workers.

Among graduates who worked full time, several differences in income were detected by alternative employment. Those who were self-employed had a higher income than their counterparts who worked for someone else, while

those with multiple jobs had a lower income than those with only one job. Those with professional occupations earned more than those with clerical and support occupations or field professions. In contrast, no income differences were found among part-time workers by self-employment, number of jobs worked, or type of occupation.

Gender differences were also observed in the relationship between income and some types of alternative employment. Among full-time male workers, self-employment was associated with higher income and working in multiple jobs was associated with lower income. These results did not apply to their female counterparts. Also, even among the alternatively employed, there were gender differences in income. For example, full-time self-employed men earned more than their female counterparts (\$43,600 vs. \$29,800). And within each occupation type, men earned more than their female counterparts. Clearly, a gender gap in earnings persists even among those with various types of employment.

While the 1992–93 bachelor’s degree recipients in alternative employment generally had fewer benefits and often had lower incomes, the analysis also shows that they often gave different reasons for choosing their jobs. Therefore, their satisfaction with their work might depend on which job characteristics are being considered. For example, part-time workers were less likely than full-time workers to be very satisfied with their job security (55 vs. 65 percent), fringe benefits (36 vs. 56 percent), and promotion opportunities (28 vs. 40 percent). However, there were no differences found between full-time and part-time workers’ satisfaction with pay, job challenge, working conditions, and relationships with coworkers.